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USDA Inside USDA Information

United States Department
of Agriculture

Office of Governmental
and Public Affairs

Washington D.C.
20250

Vol. 1

No. 20

March 23, 1979

JUST FOR YOU

Topics this week are endless...employment needs, survey results, motion picture contracting, meetings and workshops, and comments, comments, comments. Read on...

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AV SURVEY COMING

Word is going around that results of the first governmentwide survey of audiovisuals will be released soon...maybe in March...by the National Audiovisual Center (NAC).

The report will give details of FY 1978 "substantial" AV productions...primarily motion pictures, videotapes and "other" materials...made by USDA and other government departments and agencies. The report will summarize number and square feet of AV facilities. It will be provided to Congress and to OMB and is expected to get a good play in the press.

NAC says USDA agencies will need to report all "substantial" audiovisuals produced in-house or on contract for FY 1979, so now is a good time to set up a system for keeping track...making definitions of "substantial" jobs, recording titles, minutes, costs, and so on.

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NEW PROCEDURE

On March 31, a new method of contracting for films outside USDA (for USDA agencies) goes into effect. For each proposed contract, the Department will request names from the "Qualified Film Producers List." More than 300 producers are on the list now. Buddy Renfro, GPA motion picture chief, helped review the contractors' samples to determine whether contractors are qualified.

For each proposed contract, we'll get names from the list in increments of five. For each five, the GPA motion picture division can select one or two additional names from the list. Then we can solicit proposals from 5 to 10 of the qualified producers. Although price will be a factor in negotiation with the producers, technical competence and other factors will be considered.

There will be no more advertising for bids and selecting the low bidder.

A similar contracting system for videotape production is being devised by OMB and the Federal AV Committee. That system will be spelled out in the Federal Register in another month or so. It probably will go into effect next fall.

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FACTS, ANYONE?

The latest revision of the Department's popular Fact Book of U.S. Agriculture is yours for the asking. It's hot off the press and has 120 pages jammed with facts, table, and definitions.

The book will tell you what parity prices are...what the parity ratio isn't...the difference between off-farm income and nonfarm income...the difference between a watershed and a waterway...and other exotic stuff, such as knowing that you don't put a WIC in tall oil. (What was that?)

Also, there are 25 handy tables and a metric conversion guide. There's just enough about meat and poultry inspection and other programs that you can tell the press or anyone else about them.

If you haven't received your copy, write Claude Gifford, GPA. He'll get one to you pronto.

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MEETINGS NOW AND THEN Members of the American Agricultural Editors Association (AAEA) hit town next week. Almost a month later, on April 24, the Newspaper Farm Editors of America (NFEA) arrives. Both groups will hear from the top staff of USDA.

Agricultural public relations topics and issues brought about 45 members and guests to the District A ACE meeting in Seattle, March 1-2. Next week the ACE southern region will hold a workshop at Marineland, Fla. Regional publications and information programs stand high on the agenda.

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FREE BIRD SEED?

A request for the Secretary's Annual Report and Services Available Through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, contained this note from Walter P. Jones, information officer for the Ohio Department of Agriculture:

"...yesterday an elderly lady called asking how she could obtain wild bird feed from the department. She said that she had seen on TV that the department was offering wild bird feed to elderly citizens free of charge."

At least USDA doesn't offer wild bird feed...free or otherwise...to anybody. We're wondering if the Ohio department does, but doubt it.

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TRY MISSOURI

Dick Lee, Univ. of Mo., recently sent us a position announcement outlining a job immediately available in his office. The job would entail news and feature writing, some photography, handling the weekly Farm News Service, developing and maintaining liaison with the print media, and doing a bit of teaching and training. A Masters in journalism is preferred. Closing date is April 2. Send applications to Dick, 1-98 Agriculture Bldg., Columbia 65211. Telephone (314) 882-2480.

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OR, TRY GPA

GPA is seeking someone who wants a temporary assignment to write something creatively. The 1979 Yearbook of Agriculture will be a children's book on nutrition...highly illustrated...much different than previous books. If you want to try something different for a month or two, contact Ed Goodpaster, GPA.

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IN-HOUSE WORKSHOPS

Stu Sutherland, SEA, brought us an announcement of several writing workshops the D.C. and regional SEA folks have been attending. Purpose has been to provide a review of writing quality and reporting techniques by outside pros in science writing and reporting.

First meeting was March 7 in Peoria...New Orleans, March 13...Oakland, March 16...and Beltsville, March 21. About 35 of the SEA information folks attended. Instructors were from the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing.

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THANKS FOR COMMENTS

"Inside..." appreciated the comments and letters received recently about USDA, the overall departmental newsletter. Most comments have been critical, if they've originated with information folks. Others still like it.

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THE INSIDE ABOUT
INSIDE

In a few weeks, you'll probably receive "Inside..." through a different arrangement. We're attempting to computerize mailings. Expect complications, so bear with us.

A reminder..."Inside..." goes mostly to information folks...about half a dozen "others" receive it. We send it two ways: (1) to individuals where agency info. directors gave us specific names; (2) to offices where info. directors suggested it be sent in bulk for local distribution.

A primary purpose is to keep information folks aware of what USDA is doing in information...especially with regard to the establishment of regional USDA information offices. While we're at it, we also attempt to report other activities that might be of interest.

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HEARINGS BRING
QUERIES

GPA has had both hearings on the Hill...interest in the regional setup was high. Members of both the House and the Senate asked a number of questions. Some are similar to questions agency field information folks have been phoning in after receipt of the options we mentioned last week.

For instance, one Congressional question said: "Why can't the existing network of agency field offices provide the requisite information activities?" Here's GPA's answer, in part:

"Existing agency field information offices provide support for their agencies only.

"...the Science and Education Administration field information offices work only with research scientists and help report their

findings; the Food and Nutrition Service information field offices attend only to food stamp and school lunch activities; the Forest Service field information offices work only on forest conservation, fire control, forest research, and other activities for which the Forest Service has responsibility; regional information offices of the Agricultural Marketing Service work on marketing activities and cooperative programs of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, the Food Safety and Quality Service, the Federal Grain Inspection Service, and the Office of Transportation.

"But there are no field information people handling programs of the Farmers Home Administration, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Economics, Statistics and Cooperatives Service, and other agencies. None of the existing regional information officers have responsibilities that encompass price support, farm credit, disaster programs, economic analyses, or overall departmental points of view.

"The press throughout the country, and sometimes the public in general, cannot understand why an information officer from AMS, for instance, has to seek assistance when asked to explain a farm program handled by another agency. Questions get answered, but any delays in getting answers suggest inefficiency, bureaucratic fumbling, and downright incompetency.

"Our plan will provide coordination of all agency information activities, will provide one-stop access to all departmental programs, and still provide various agencies with information support to their programs. The problem is not so much that the present agency field offices are not doing their job but that the overall need is not being met. We feel it would be less expensive to coordinate what now exists rather than to encourage unrepresented agencies to install field information offices. Even if that were the solution, the overall departmental leadership would still be deficient in the field."

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IT'S ICD, NOT IDS

The International Development Staff (IDS) has changed its name. Now it's called the Office of International Cooperation and Development (ICD). You may want to make that change on the list of agencies we sent you a couple of weeks ago.

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TRY PICTUREPHONE

Television's rise probably made us forget about an invention, new and promising many years ago. It is called "Picturephone." This week, Secretary Bergland talked to reporters via picturephone in Atlanta, San Francisco, Chicago, Raleigh, and Rochester, Minn. He fielded questions for about four hours.

Later he said we might all consider use of the picturephone where possible to cut down on travel. If you want details about the technique, get in touch with Paul Darby, GPA. (202) 447-8979.